

## Message Text

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16

ACTION ARA-10

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USIA-06 AID-05 /071 W

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R 252214Z MAR 75

FM AMEMASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3396

INFO PANCANAL

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USMISSION UN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PANAMA 1716

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN, CS, CO, VE

SUBJ: PRESIDENTS' MEETING IN PANAMA--LATE DEVELOPMENTS AND  
INITIAL REACTION

REFS: PANAMA 1678 AND 1683

SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO STRONG GENERAL SUPPORT VOICED IN JOINT  
DECLARATION, PANAMA ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE SECURED FIRM  
COLOMBIA, VENEZUELAN AND COSTA RICAN BACKING FOR ITS UN  
SECURITY COUNCIL CANDIDACY. WITH RESPECT TO "AGREEMENT" ON  
COLOMBIA'S URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY RIGHTS--THE EXACT MEANING OF  
WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN MISSED IN PART--PRESIDENT LOPEZ  
HAS ATTEMPTED IN PRESS CONFERENCE TO PUT MATTER IN PROPER  
PERSPECTIVE. INITIAL LOCAL MEDIA REACTION, WITH ON  
EXCEPTION, HAS BEEN LAVISH IN PROCLAIMING MEETING RESULTS  
A TRIUMPH FOR TORRIJOS, PANAMA, AND LATIN AMERICA. END  
SUMMARY.

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1. WHILE NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN JOINT DECLARATION

MATTER OF PANAMA'S QUEST FOR UN SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT APPEARS ALSO TO HAVE RECEIVED FULL SUPPORT OF VISITING CHIEF EXECUTIVES. ACCORDING TO CRITICA MARCH 25, GENERAL TORRIJOS -- IN COMMENTS TO ALCA-EFE REPORTER -- AFFIRMED THAT VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA HAD PLEDGED PANAMA THEIR SUPPORT AND UNDERTAKEN TO SEEK A LATIN CONSENSUS THAT ARGENTINA SHOULD CEDE ITS CANDIDACY IN FAVOR OF PANAMA. IT WAS ALSO REPORTED THAT, IN A TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA, THE MEXICAN CHIEF EXECUTIVE HAD PROMISED TORRIJOS AND PRESIDENT PEREZ HIS "GOOD OFFICES" TO SEEK POSTPONEMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN GROUP SELECTION OF COUNCIL CANDIDATE UNTIL SEPTEMBER, AN INITIATIVE SAID ALREADY TO HAVE BEEN PUT IN MOTION BY COSTA RICA. IN HIS AFTERNOON PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 24 (FULL TEXT CARRIED BY FBIS), PRESIDENT LOPEZ MICHELSEN CONFIRMED COLOMBIA'S COMMITMENT TO GOP'S COUNCIL CANDIDACY BUT DISCLAIMED DIRECT KNOWLEDGE OF CONVERSATION WITH MEXICAN PRESIDENT.

2. QUESTION OF COLOMBIA'S "RENUNCIATION" OF ITS URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY RIGHTS -- AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHICH APPEARS TO HAVE ESCAPED MANY REPORTERS -- WAS ALSO PROMINENT SUBJECT OF LOPEZ PRESS CONFERENCE. ATTEMPTING TO PUT MATTER IN CORRECT CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT, LOPEZ REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT WHAT IT ALL MEANT IS THAT (1) WHEN PANAMA RECOVERS, UNDER A NEW TREATY, ITS FULL JURISDICTION OVER THE CANAL, THE U.S. WILL NO LONGER BE IN A POSITION TO FULFILL ITS URRUTIA-THOMSON OBLIGATIONS, AND (2) PANAMA HAS AGREED THAT, WHEN THIS OCCURS, IT WILL GIVE SIMILAR RIGHTS TO COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA "BECAUSE OUR TWO NATIONS ARE NEIGHBORS." MOREOVER, SAID LOPEZ, THE U.S. REACTION MUST BE FAVORABLE BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN "RELIEVED" OF THE PROBLEM IT WOULD HAVE HAD IN ATTEMPTING TO COMPLY WITH THE URRUTIA-THOMSON TREATY. ASKED IF COLOMBIA WOULD MAINTAIN ITS SUPPORT FOR PANAMA AND "RENOUNCE" ITS TREATY RIGHTS IF A NEW CANAL TREATY IS NOT CONCLUDED, LOPEZ STRESSED THERE WAS NO CONNECTION BETWEEN SUPPORT AND RENUNCIATION. THE GOC, SAID LOPEZ, WOULD SUPPORT PANAMA AND DEMAND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAT THE U.S. CONTINUE TO FULFILL ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS TO COLOMBIA.

3. INITIAL MEDIA REACTION TO MEETING AND JOINT DECLARATION HAS BEEN INTENSE, ENTHUSIASTIC AND ASSERTIVE. CRITICA HEADLINES PROCLAIMED "SUMMIT" MEETING TRIUMPH FOR TORRIJOS DIPLOMACY, AND FEATURE REPORTING AND COMMENTARY HAS HAILED DECLARATION AS VICTORY FOR TORRIJOS, PANAMA,

AND LATIN AMERICA. SEMI-INDEPENDENT ESTRELLA DE PANAMA  
PRAISED RESULTS FOR BOTH ITS INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC  
SIGNIFICANCE. IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA IT SIGNIFIED  
ONCE AGAIN THAT PANAMA "IS NOT ALONE" WHILE INTERNALLY IT  
DEMONSTRATES THAT PANAMANIAN MUST REMAIN FAITHFUL  
TO THE GOP'S "NATIONALISTIC AND DEMOCRATIC" POSITION.  
GOP-CONTROLLED MATUTINO, IN ITS FEATURE MARCH 25  
EDITORIAL, EMPHASIZED "HISTORIC" END TO COLOMBIANA  
PANAMANIAN ILL-WILL, A CARRY-OVER OF PANAMA'S  
INDEPENDENCE FROM COLOMBIA, AND STRESSED THAT, IN  
SPIRIT OF NEW LATIN UNITY, TWO COUNTRIES HAD PUT  
THEIR DIFFERENCES BEHIND THEM. MATUTINO'S INFLUENTIAL  
URRACA COLUMN, IN ADDITION TO HAILING SUPPORT FOR  
PANAMA, CHARACTERIZED MEETING AS TRIUMPH FOR LATIN  
AMERICA AND A GIANT STEP TOWARD LATIN UNITY.  
ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE, RADIO IMACTO'S ALBERTO QUIROS  
GUARDIA, A "PURE NATIONALIST" SPOKESMAN AND FREQUENT  
CRITIC OF THE CURRENT CANAL NEGOTIATIONS, SHARPLY  
ATTACKED GOP FOR GRANTING UNNECESSARY CONCESSIONS TO  
COLOMBIA AND COSTA RICA.  
JORDEN

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